Hancock yields very good in 2017

After last year’s harvest, the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) surveyed farmers and other entities to establish the average crop yields for each county in Ohio. It takes several months to gather and analyze the data.

Once analyzed, averages will be determined and released to the public as the official county average. NASS goes through this process every year.

The average 2017 yields for Hancock and surrounding counties became available last week. Even though these are estimated numbers, the government and industry will use these values for historical records, and government farm payments will be based on these values.

Compared to the 10-year average for the three major crops grown in Hancock County, yields were very good last year for corn, soybeans and wheat. All three crops were above the 10-year county average, especially corn.

Weather, particularly excessive rain, affected the local crops. Hancock County farmers did not harvest 3,000 planted corn acres and 500 acres of soybeans because of extensive damage, probably from excessive water. However, conditions were still adequate for most fields to have above-average yields.

Overall, Ohio had a great corn crop, tying the average yield record of 177 bushels an acre set in 2013. South central and southwestern Ohio were the largest-yielding regions of the state.

Hancock County’s yield average was 170 bushels per acre — 7 bushels less than the state average, but 14.2 bushels better than the 10-year county average. A nice rebound after two years of disappointing corn yields. The 2017 crop yielded approximately 30 bushels more per acre than 2016 and 2015.

Corn production in 2017, or yield times harvested acres, was 13.6 million bushels — 2 million bushels more than 2016. Hancock County moved up one place in the state rankings, to 11th place compared with 12th in 2016. It is the third year in a row that Hancock County was not in the top 10 corn-producing counties of Ohio.

Of the surrounding counties, only Wood (sixth) and Seneca (eighth) were among the top 10 producing counties in the state. Putnam and Hardin counties ranked 16th and 17th, respectively. Wyandot was 22nd. Darke County was once again first with production of 19.9 million bushels.

For the first time, Hancock County farmers planted 140,000 acres of soybeans last year. The increased acreage ensured that Hancock would be one of the top 10 producing soybean counties for Ohio. Soybean production in 2017 was 6.8 million bushels, 115,000 bushels more than in 2016. Hancock County ranked fourth in the state for soybean production, rising from seventh place in 2016. Wood County dropped from the top spot in 2016 to second place. Darke County ranked first with 77 million bushels.

Other top-producing counties in the region included Seneca (sixth), and Putnam (eighth). Wyandot and Hardin counties came in at 13th and 20th, respectively.

Wheat yields were good in the area but less than the record set in 2016. Hancock County’s yield average was 79 bushels per acre, 5.7 bushels less than 2016. County wheat yields were five bushels better than the state average yield of 74 bushels an acre.

Wheat production was 1.5 million bushels for Hancock County, 333,000 less than in 2016. Hancock still ranks in the top 10 Ohio wheat producing counties, maintaining the sixth spot for the second year in a row. Putnam, Wood, and Seneca counties were the top three wheat-producing counties in the state.

Despite a good wheat production year for Hancock County, farmers planted the fewest acres of wheat in recent history. Only 19,100 acres were planted, the first time planted acres were below 20,000. A little over five years ago, Hancock County farmers would have planted 40,000 acres of wheat.

Wheat acres accounted for about 5 percent of the acres planted to grain crops in Hancock County. Soybeans had the most acres at 58 percent, followed by corn at 34 percent. Compared to 2016, corn acres stayed the same, wheat was 1 percent less and soybeans were 1 percent more.

The annual average grain price received by Ohio farmers was slightly lower for corn and soybeans in 2017 compared to 2016. Average annual Ohio wheat price was about 65 cents higher in 2017. The average Ohio 2017 price received was $3.55 a bushel for corn, $8.30 for soybeans, and $4.90 for wheat.

Farmers are hoping for a good crop and better grain prices this year. Currently there is an abundant supply of corn and soybeans in the U.S. from 2017, and in a few months Brazil will be adding beans to the world soybean supply. It may be another tough year for grain farmers no matter what the weather does in 2018.

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